

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 219377

TOSEC 135

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION CAIRO INFO ALGIERS AMMAN BEIRUT JIDDA
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QUOTE

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NOFORN DISSEM, TOSEC 135

E.O. 11652: GDS

SUBJECT: SADAT'S CURRENT STRATEGY

1. FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT WAS PREPARED NOVEMBER 6 BY INR,
AFTER DISCUSSION WITH DIA, AS BACKGROUND FOR SECRETARY'S
MEETINGS WITH SADAT.

2. RECENT MILITARY MOVEMENTS IN EGYPT AND SYRIA SUGGEST
PREPARATIONS FOR RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES. EGYPT HAS
REPORTEDLY DEPLETED CAIRO AND RED SEA COASTAL DEFENSES TO
REINFORCE FIRST ARMY (WEST OR ISRAELI BRIDGEHEAD) AND
SECOND ARMY (STRADDLING NORTHERN HALF OF CANAL).

3. SADAT IS UNDER DOMESTIC PRESSURE TO REOPEN CORRIDOR TO
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MAROONED THIRD ARMY IN NEXT FEW DAYS AND ELIMINATE ISRAELI

SALIENT NOT LONG THEREAFTER. HE CLEARLY HOPES THAT PROSPECT OF IMMINENT RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES WILL ANIMATE US TO PERSUADE ISRAEL TO LET EGYPT REOPEN CORRIDOR AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO WITHDRAW ACROSS CANAL--IN RETURN FOR RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND PERHAPS LIFTING OF RED SEA BLOCKADE. IF THIS FAILS, CHANCES ARE EGYPT WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPEL ISRAELIS BY FORCE.

4. EGYPTIAN STRATEGY MIGHT WELL BE BASED ON ATTEMPT BY SECOND ARMY TO MOVE SOUTH ALONG EAST BANK OF CANAL TO LINK UP WITH THIRD ARMY WHICH WOULD BE USING ITS LAST STRENGTH TO PUSH NORTH TO ESCAPE TRAP. UNLESS THE ISRAELIS HAD HURRIEDLY PULLED BACK TO THE EAST BANK, EGYPTIAN SUCCESS IN THIS EFFORT WOULD ISOLATE THE ISRAELI BRIDGEHEAD ON WEST BANK, AND ALLOW OTHER EGYPTIAN UNITS TO STRIKE SOUTH ALONG WEST BANK AND ON OTHER POINTS OF PERIMETER OF ISRAELI BRIDGEHEAD TO STRANGLE THE SALIENT.

5. SADAT WOULD HAVE CONSIDERABLE ARAB SUPPORT FOR RESUMING HOSTILITIES. ARRIVALS IN EGYPT SINCE CEASE-FIRE REPORTEDLY BRING ALGERIAN FORCE IN EGYPT TO ONE ARMORED BRIGADE AND FOUR AIR SQUADRONS. SYRIAN SENTIMENT FOR RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES ON GOLAN FRONT IS STRONG, AND SYRIA AND EGYPT ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO ACT IN CONCERT, DESPITE SYRIAN ANNOYANCE OVER EGYPT'S UNILATERAL CEASE-FIRE. BOUMEDIENE, NOW IN BAGHDAD, IS REPORTEDLY URGING IRAQ TO SEND BACK TO SYRIA FORCES WITHDRAWN IN PROTEST AGAINST SYRIAN ACCEPTANCE OF CEASE-FIRE. IRAQI REGIME WILL BE UNDER STRONG POPULAR PRESSURE TO GO BACK IN IF SYRIA CAN SUSTAIN RENEWED HOSTILITIES FOR A WEEK OR SO.

6. ISRAEL'S MILITARY POSITION TODAY IS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF OCTOBER 6 IN SEVERAL RESPECTS: IT HOLDS ADDITIONAL EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN TERRITORY, IT IS ALMOST FULLY MOBILIZED, IT HAS UPDATED ITS ARMS INVENTORY, IT HAS ALMOST COMPLETED A CAUSEWAY ACROSS THE CANAL, AND IT HAS REDUCED THE RANKS OF TRAINED EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN PERSONNEL. IT RETAINS CLEAR QUALITATIVE TANK-TO-TANK AND
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AIR-TO-AIR SUPERIORITY. THE TIGHT REIN ON THE THIRD ARMY SUGGESTS DETERMINATION TO DENY EGYPT ANY MILITARY FOOTHOLD IN SINAI.

7. HOWEVER, ISRAEL NEEDS A QUICK VICTORY. PROLONGED WAR-TIME ALERT AND MOBILIZATION ARE TAKING ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TOLL. ISRAEL HAS NO KNOWN CAPABILITY TO BREACH EGYPT'S BAB EL MANDEB BLOCKADE, WHICH HAS COMPELLED

ISRAEL TO ORDER ITS TANKERS AROUND THE CAPE, SINCE POL STORES MUST NOW BE DOWN TO ABOUT ONE MONTH. MILITARY OPTIONS ON GOLAN FRONT ARE RESTRICTED BY STRONG SYRIAN DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AND WINTER RAINS WHICH TEND TO NEUTRALIZE TANK ADVANTAGE AND FACILITATE DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS BY ARAB INFANTRY CARRYING ANTI-TANK MISSILES.

8. INDICATED ISRAELI STRATEGY WOULD APPEAR TO BE ANOTHER SHORT ROUND OF ALL-OUT AIR AND TANK ACTION TO ROUT ARAB FORCES ON SUEZ FRONT. WASHINGTON CONSENSUS IS THAT, BARRING SOVIET INTERVENTION, ISRAEL HAS CAPABILITY TO DO THIS IN ANOTHER TWO OR THREE WEEKS, PARTICULARLY SINCE, TO RESCUE THIRD ARMY, EGYPTIAN FIRST AND SECOND ARMIES WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO VENTURE OUT FROM UNDER SAM UMBRELLA.

9. HOWEVER, SADAT, BASING HIS JUDGMENT ON SOVIET BEHAVIOR (AND PROBABLY PRIVATE STATEMENTS) SINCE THE START OF THE WAR, UNDOUBTEDLY BELIEVES THAT MOSCOW WILL NEVER PERMIT THE FIGHTING TO CONTINUE LONG ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE ROUT OF EGYPTIAN FORCES. THUS, IF THE ABOVE-POSTULATED STRATEGY FOR RESUMED HOSTILITIES BACKFIRES, HE CAN LOOK AGAIN TO MOSCOW TO RESCUE HIM FROM THE CONSEQUENCES, EITHER BY THE DIRECT INTERVENTION WITH SOVIET FORCES, OR, PREFERABLY, BY US DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO STOP ITS ADVANCE. RUSH UNQUOTE RUSH

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